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LETTER DATED 24 JUNE 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith an aide-mémoire by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (see annex), regarding the statement issued on 18 June 1999 by the Presidency of the European Union on the situation in Somalia.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Aide-mémoire by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

The Government of Ethiopia is dismayed by the declaration of the European Union Presidency of 18 June 1999 regarding what it calls "Ethiopia/Eritrea intervention in Somalia".

It is a matter of record that Ethiopia has over the past year time and time again explained the facts relating to the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict triggered off by Eritrea's aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

Like all States, Ethiopia has the right to defend itself, and it has been forced to take defensive action in the face of Eritrean intransigence and the absence of any international pressure that would compel Eritrea to withdraw its troops from Ethiopian territory. Although the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has explicitly called for Eritrea to withdraw from all territories it has occupied since 6 May 1998, the European Union (EU) has not said a word, let alone taken meaningful measures, to back the OAU position that was once again clearly presented to Eritrea on 11 May 1999.

Rather than call upon Eritrea to withdraw its troops as required, most EU members have preferred to put pressure on the victim of aggression, slowing down and halting development cooperation, and taking unprecedented positions at international financial forums to punish Ethiopia. The EU has furthermore introduced an arms embargo on both the victim and the perpetrator of the aggression.

As if the damage done to the confidence once enjoyed between EU States and Ethiopia was not enough, today the EU has found it important to pronounce itself on Somalia in a manner that is devoid of any understanding of the complex situation in Somalia and the entire region.

As the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and OAU mandated country to spearhead international efforts to support the Somalis to achieve peace and national reconciliation, Ethiopia has for many years been striving to draw attention to the growing crisis in Somalia, caused by the absence of state and exacerbated by the establishment there of a bridgehead for terrorism directed against neighbouring States in particular and the international community in general. A serious response to the repeated warnings of Ethiopia in the form of tangible support to the IGAD peace process was not forthcoming.

Is it now after the damage has been done, after months of massive arms transfers to terrorist groups based in Somalia and bent on destabilizing Ethiopia, after their conspiracy and preparation is thwarted, that the EU finds it appropriate to speak out on Somalia?

Ethiopia cannot believe that the EU is unaware of what was being built up in Somalia and of who has been intervening in the country. It is public knowledge that Eritrea was supplying arms to a specific faction directly linked

to terrorist groups, such as the Oromo Liberation Front and Al-Ittihad. Is Ethiopia expected to ignore the destabilizing activity of these groups whose objectives are also clear to other States neighbouring Somalia? Have not citizens of EU States been victims of the terrorist organizations concerned?

The Government of Ethiopia can only express its incomprehension regarding not only the lack of understanding and insensitivity displayed in the statement but also the abdication of responsibility that it signifies. The international community cannot continue to put its head in the sand, blaming both the perpetrator of crimes and the victim time and again. After all, if anyone is standing up against terrorism in this region it is Ethiopia, and if any message is needed from the international community, it is one which reflects responsibility and a proper grasp of the gravity of the situation in Somalia and the subregion. Seen in that light, the EU statement sends a completely wrong message and is, therefore, uncalled for. Ethiopia once again calls on the EU and its member States to re-examine their position on the issues referred to here if they are to make a constructive contribution to promoting peace in the Horn of Africa.